

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Language from a bill introduced by Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel) in May designed to improve public use of excess military property has been included in the House-passed version of the National Defense Authorization Act.

Rep. Farr's language would reinstitute use of the No-Cost Economic Development Conveyance (known as a no-cost EDC) as the primary tool for land transfers between the Department of Defense and local communities. Once the main mechanism for land transfers following base closures, the no-cost EDC is currently available only at the discretion of the Secretary of Defense and has not been used for years.

"The no-cost EDC is the obvious tool for transferring property back to civilian control," Rep. Farr said. "Taxpayers already forfeited these lands so bases could be built. Then, they subsidized construction of the installations. And today they're paying even more to clean up toxic and hazardous waste. But rather than offering these lands to communities for economic development, the Defense Department wants to squeeze more money by demanding communities pay yet again for the land."

The no-cost EDC is a vital tool for dozens of communities nationwide that have requested property transfer but have been denied by the Department of Defense.

"Representative Sam Farr has been a strong and active advocate for the expansion of no-cost EDCs, which will help communities affected by BRAC develop these lands for rapid reuse," said Rep. Ike Skelton (D-Mo.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. "This provision will make it easier for communities to improve the quality of life in areas most impacted by base closure and realignment decisions."

Michael Houlemard, president of the Association of Defense Communities and executive director of the Fort Ord Reuse Authority, added: "Representative Sam Farr has championed local reuse programs by leading the Congressional efforts to restore no-cost transfer mechanisms recognized as the most expeditious and effective means to produce rapid local reuse, essential jobs, and economic recovery. The Association of Defense Communities membership continues to applaud his leadership and support for all defense communities."

Houlemard continued: "I endorse the critical provision included in House bill 2647 to assist communities facing the closure of a military installation. At a time in which economic stimulus is needed, a jobs-based approach to transferring excess military property can result in multiple benefits to local communities and the nation as a whole. No-cost EDCs are a successful tool for property disposal, job creation and local economic redevelopment, while at the same time eliminating the needs for the federal government to maintain properties it no longer uses."

The Senate-passed version of the bill does not include the no-cost EDC provision. The two versions of the bill are currently being negotiated in a House-Senate conference committee. When a compromise bill is completed, both chambers will vote on the legislation before it is sent to the president for signature.

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